



**State of Delaware**

**Department of Education**

Partnership Zone Initiative

**Request for Qualification (RFQ DOE # 2012-01)**

Lead Turnaround Partners for Partnership Zone Schools

Issue date: July 28, 2011

Responses due: August 23, 2011, 3:00PM EDT

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) is currently seeking information from providers interested in serving as lead turnaround partners in one or more of the state's persistently low-achieving schools identified for Delaware's newly established Partnership Zone (PZ). The following Request for Qualification (RFQ) provides further details of this request and instructions for providers interested in responding.

### 1.1 Purpose of Request for Qualification (RFQ)

A second cohort of schools will enter Delaware's Partnership Zone Initiative in fall 2011. Six schools will be selected to receive additional funding through Race to the Top and staffing and operational flexibility in order to pursue dramatic school turnaround. The Delaware Department of Education's School Turnaround Unit (STU) is in the process of gathering information from proven operational partners who are interested in serving as Lead Turnaround Partners in PZ schools. The purpose of this RFQ is to identify interested partners and gather information regarding how partners deliver their model of school turnaround. The School Turnaround Unit will provide this information to districts/charter schools identified in the second round of partnership zone schools in order to help them craft an RFP for a lead turnaround partner.

### 1.2 Timeline and expectations

The proposed schedule of events subject to the RFQ is as follows:

Public Notice	July 28, 2011
Deadline for RFQ Submissions	August 23, 2011
Presentation to PZ Schools	Late September/Early October

All proposals must be submitted by **August 23, 2011 at 3:00PM EDT**. Proposals will be screened for compliance with all required information. Incomplete submissions will not be considered. The requested information will be reviewed by the School Turnaround Unit. The School Turnaround Unit may invite respondents to make presentations to the identified partnership zone schools.

Providers responding through this process are not guaranteed a contract with a school or district as a result of this RFQ. The State may facilitate an introduction between potential providers and LEAs in the Partnership Zone in a state-sponsored forum.

## **SECTION 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **2.1 DOE mission statement and Race to the Top goals**

Delaware's Department of Education is committed to promoting the highest quality education for every Delaware student by providing visionary leadership and superior service. Therefore, within the next four years, Delaware will challenge its local education agencies to work together to achieve the following goals:

- 60% proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on Grade 4 Math; 55% proficiency on Grade 4 Reading, Grade 8 Math and Grade 8 Reading by 2015.
- Racial (black-white and Hispanic-white) and income (low income-high income) achievement gaps that close by half on NAEP by 2015.
- 100% of students meeting state standards on the Delaware state math and reading exams by 2014.
- A No Child Left Behind graduation rate of 90% for the class entering high school in 2014.
- A college enrollment rate of 70% by 2014.
- A college retention rate of 85% by 2014, as measured by the percent of college students who complete at least one year of college credits within two years.

As a Round 1 winner of Race to the Top funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Delaware is now implementing a four-year, statewide plan to become one of the best school systems in the country. Through Race to the Top, the State will build upon its strong infrastructure for reform to achieve significant gains in student achievement so that every student graduates college and career ready. Delaware's plan centers around dramatically improved classroom instruction that is achieved through more effective teachers and leaders, rigorous standards, curriculum and assessments, sophisticated data systems and practices, and deep support for the lowest-achieving schools.

### **2.2 Turnaround strategy**

Delaware is committed to rapidly improving its lowest-achieving schools, and will lead at least 10 failing schools (approximately 5% of all public schools in Delaware) to achieve AYP over the next five years. To accomplish this goal, the State is implementing a comprehensive plan to identify its lowest-achieving schools and support LEAs in turning them around. The plan has five main components:

- (1) Identifying persistently lowest-achieving schools and selecting a subset annually to pursue rapid reform through the State's Partnership Zone.
- (2) Using the significant authority provided by recently enacted regulations to ensure that meaningful, effective change occurs in Partnership Zone schools.
- (3) Establishing a School Turnaround Unit (STU) to build local capacity and support LEAs in planning and implementation.
- (4) Monitoring progress and holding LEAs accountable for results.
- (5) Providing comprehensive supports and monitoring for schools at-risk of failure.

A key piece of this strategy is the Partnership Zone Initiative, designed to provide additional support for the dramatic transformation of Delaware's lowest-performing schools.

### **2.3 Partnership Zone overview**

The DDOE launched the Partnership Zone (PZ) in 2010 to dramatically improve the lowest-achieving schools in the state. Schools are selected by a two-step process that includes both a quantitative analysis to determine the persistently lowest achieving schools on the state's reading and math assessments using trend and performance data, and a qualitative analysis considering factors generated with input from various stakeholder groups and approved by Secretary of Education Lillian Lowery.

In fall of 2010, the DDOE created the School Turnaround Unit (STU) to support and monitor PZ schools. Four schools were selected to be a part of the PZ in 2010, and six new schools will be selected in late August, 2011. All schools selected must pursue one of four federally mandated turnaround models: 1. school closure; 2. restart; 3. turnaround; or 4. transformation. PZ schools receive additional financial support and technical assistance, and are encouraged to utilize some of the following strategies to improve students' academic achievement: increased instructional time inclusive of enrichment, intervention and cultural enhancement opportunities, embedded collaboration time for instructional staff, reflection and possible alterations of school leadership staff; and meaningful family engagement activities.

For more information about the PZ, associated state regulations, and federal school reform models, see: 14 DE Reg § 103.7.6 : <http://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/100/103.pdf>

### **2.4 Delaware LEA and school data**

Delaware's school system is made up of 19 school districts and 23 charter schools. These districts represent a broad spectrum including urban and rural, large and small schools, with enrollments exceeding 10,000 students in the largest districts, and reaching less than 1,000 students in the smallest. Many students, particularly in the more rural districts, attend high poverty schools.

For more information regarding Delaware's schools and school performance data, please refer to: <http://profiles.doe.k12.de.us/SchoolProfiles/State/Default.aspx>

## SECTION 3: SCOPE OF WORK

Schools participating in the Partnership Zone will be selected by the State through a separate identification process (See Section 2). PZ schools will be eligible to receive:

- Significant funding through the State's allocation of RTTT PZ and School Improvement Grant (1003(g)) funds for PZ schools;
- State support and technical assistance;
- Support from Lead Turnaround Partners to implement turnaround plans.

LEAs selected for the PZ will enter into a 75-day planning process wherein the LEA will:

- Work with the PZ school community to choose one of four reform models – turnaround, transformation, school closure, or restart – and develop a turnaround plan outlining the aggressive and intensive strategies the school will undertake over the two- to three-year turnaround period to significantly improve student achievement;
- Secure a collective bargaining agreement; and
- Enter an MOU with the DDOE regarding the reform model, improvement plan, implementation timeline, and DDOE oversight.

All LEAs have **the option** of choosing to work with a Lead Turnaround Partner to help plan and manage the turnaround process. LEAs may choose to outsource management of Partnership Zone schools to a third party operating partner. Lead Partners should be identified and agreed upon in the LEA's proposed plan with a preliminary contract and be approved by the Secretary before funds can be released. If the Secretary does not approve the plan, or a plan is not made within 120 days, the LEA must choose to close the school, reopen as a charter, or contract with a private management organization. This work will occur in two phases:

**Phase 1:** Planning (September/October 2011 – January 2012) - LEAs will work with the STU and possibly a Lead Partners to perform a needs assessment, draft turnaround plans, prepare implementation timelines, negotiate collective bargaining agreements, and secure plan approval from the Secretary.

**Phase 2:** Implementation and progress monitoring (February 2012 – end of contract) – LEAs will begin evaluating and hiring new staff, contracting with additional providers for supplemental services, and preparing for full implementation starting in the 2012-2013 school year.

Districts will have the autonomy to possibly enter into MOUs with Lead Partners for one or both phases of the work.

### 3.1 Statement of Needs / Priorities

The State is seeking information on Lead Turnaround Partners who are able to implement or support the following design factors of High-Poverty, High-Performing (HPPH) schools that increase the school's effectiveness in promoting learning and achievement:

1. Readiness to Learn
  - A safe and disciplined learning environment so that students are secure, engaged and feel inspired to learn
  - Action to directly address poverty-related deficits

- Close student-adult relationships to provide students with positive and enduring relationships
- 2. Readiness to Teach
  - Shared staff responsibility and accountability for student achievement
  - Personalized instruction based on diagnostic assessment and adjustable time on task
  - Professional teaching culture that encourages continuous improvement through collaboration and job-embedded learning
- 3. Readiness to Act
  - Authority to make mission-based decisions over resources including people, time, money, and program
  - Ingenuity in securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships
  - Flexibility and creativity in response to constant turmoil

Successful Lead Partners will be able to meet all of the following conditions:

1. LP must be capable of making measureable gains in student achievement over a relatively short period of time (2 years)
2. LP must demonstrate the capacity to turn around a persistently low achieving school
3. LP must be able to support the LEAs efforts to recruit an effective school leader and work with them collaboratively, as well as assist in the recruitment and evaluation of teaching staff
4. LP must work with the PZ school and community to design and implement a comprehensive school reform plan
5. LP must have field staff who can work on the ground, directly with school staff

### 3.2 Definition of Partner Responsibilities

**Lead Turnaround Partners** are organizations on contract with the district central office to turn around schools. The role of the Lead Partner is typically defined by four overarching responsibilities:

1. **Accountability.** The Lead Partner is held accountable for results through an MOU that outlines accountability measures, performance monitoring expectations, and impact metrics.
2. **Governance.** The Lead Partner collaborates with the school/district in decision making on school operations and staffing including hiring a new principal or approving the current one and supporting the principal in staffing an effective cohort of new or rehired instructional staff
3. **Comprehensive services.** The Lead Partner provides core academic and student support services directly or by aligning the services of other program and support partners that may sub-contract with the Lead Partner
4. **Embedded, consistent school presence.** The Lead Partner maintains an embedded, consistent, and intense relationship with each school that requires a daily presence in the school during the turnaround period throughout the length of the contract

The district will be responsible to negotiate with potential Lead Partners an appropriate/approved level of responsibility for managing and implementing the turnaround plan.

Some of the terms the district and Lead Partner may decide to negotiate could include the following:

- Establishing a performance contract/MOU with the LEA stating the agreed upon autonomies awarded to the Lead Partner
- Meeting the agreed upon performance criteria as stated in the performance contract

- Participating in data collection, evaluation, and reporting duties as required by the State and accepting accountability for school performance indicators.
- Assuming full responsibility for the school's performance per terms of the performance contract.
- Providing ongoing performance data to both the LEA and the DOE including leading and lagging indicators as specified by the State's performance monitoring guidelines.
- Establishing an embedded presence in the school and maintaining consistent and intensive onsite support.
- Assisting district leadership with identifying and hiring a principal and working with school leadership to recruit, hire, and evaluate additional staff members.
- Managing the day-to-day operations and needs of the school including directly supporting the principal and other staff on instructional and operational matters.
- Liaising with district offices to ensure that PZ schools fulfill district requirements and district offices meet the needs of PZ schools.
- Discussing progress and barriers with the principal(s) and key stakeholders on a regular basis.
- Ensuring that the turnaround plan is implemented with fidelity at the school level.
- Providing direct support to or organizing the necessary resources to support target areas: (e.g., evaluation, instruction, leadership, human capital, community involvement) based on identified needs.
- All other responsibilities as outlined in the contract between the LEA and the partner.

### **3.3 Expectations for LEAs and DOE**

#### **All LEAs/Charters will:**

- Follow the process for turning around PZ schools in accordance with State regulations and the selected reform model:
  - Decide on a reform model, craft a plan, and negotiate for necessary flexibility with the local collective bargaining unit
  - Implement one of four intervention models: Turnaround, Restart, School Closure, or Transformation, as defined in RTTT guidelines
  - Achieve AYP within two years of operations as part of the Partnership Zone
- Provide support to schools in the Partnership Zone
- Integrate learnings from Partnership Zone schools to build district capacity to improve performance of low-achieving schools

**The DOE** will support all PZ schools through the disbursement of funding through the Partnership Zone and School Improvement Grant programs. The STU will provide ongoing technical assistance and training throughout the planning and implementation process, will assign a liaison to each PZ school, and will administer all necessary oversight as required by law.



## SECTION 4: REQUIRED INFORMATION

The following section outlines the information that respondents will be requested to submit in their response to this RFQ. Additional instructions for submission follow in Section 5.

### 4.1 Provider Model

(5 Pages)

Please describe your provider model, including the programs and services that your organization offers to support school turnaround. Please include in your response your organization's strategies to address the responsibilities of Lead Turnaround Partners as outlined in Section 3, with particular attention in the following HPHP (High-Performing, High Poverty Schools) priority areas:

- **People:** What are your strategies to recruit and retain highly effective leaders and teachers? What does your hiring and selection process entail? How do you determine professional development needs? How do you deliver and evaluate professional development? Do you have your own systems for evaluation and improvement?
- **Time:** Does your model use extended learning time? In what ways is extended learning time used to accomplish program goals? What is your scheduling model? What are the advantages of using this type of schedule?
- **Money:** What is your organization's role in the fiscal and operational management of partner schools? What resources do you typically control in turnaround partnerships?
- **Program:** What is your organization's role in the management or delivery of the school program? Does your organization provide core academic services? What elements of program are you able to deliver yourself, and which elements might you look to the school or a partner to provide? Does your organization work with additional supporting partners? If so, how? How would you go about ensuring the effective alignment of supplemental services (including socio-emotional support, community engagement, etc.)? How do you monitor student progress?

### 4.2 Experience in School Turnaround

(5 Pages)

What is your organization's experience serving as a turnaround operator and/or managing low-performing schools? This experience can include school management, academic services, community engagement, leadership, planning, and/or operations. Please include examples of schools that you have worked with and evidence of academic improvement (specific data) as a result of your interventions.

### 4.3 Evidence of Research-based Design

(4 Pages)

What is the research base and rationale that supports your organization's turnaround model/approach? (Include appropriate citations) This section should provide adequate support to demonstrate the validity of your model and how your approach will provide sufficient intervention to produce rapid improvement in PZ schools.

### 4.4 Staffing Model

(2 Pages)

What is your staffing model? Please provide a short narrative detailing the roles of key staff involved in your current turnaround partnerships.

#### **4.5 Cost Information**

**(2 Pages)**

What are the costs associated with your model? How do you determine the cost of your model? Please provide an example of your cost methodology for 1) a preliminary contract for a 3-4 month planning engagement in which your organization would work with the PZ district/s and school/s to develop a turnaround plan, and 2) an implementation contract for a 2-3 year engagement, to be reevaluated on an annual basis, to support and implement the turnaround plan. Acceptable costs could include additional staffing to manage turnaround, subcontracts with vendors to provide supplemental services that support the turnaround plan, and operational costs.

## SECTION 5: INSTRUCTIONS FOR RRESPONSES

### 5.1 Timeline for Submission

All submissions must be received and/or postmarked no later than **3pm on Tuesday, August 23, 2011**. Proposals received after the August 23, 2011 deadline without a U.S. Post Office postmark of August 23, 2011 will not be considered.

Responses must be submitted both in hard copy by mail and electronic copy by email. Please submit 3 hard copies of your application. Email copies should be sent to [sholston@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:sholston@doe.k12.de.us). Responses submitted electronically by the above deadline will not be considered if the hard-copy submission is not also received by the stated deadline. Applications should be mailed to:

Attn: School Turnaround Unit  
John W. Collette Education Resource Center  
35 Commerce Way, Suite 1  
Dover, Delaware 19904  
[sholston@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:sholston@doe.k12.de.us)

#### For assistance or questions:

Questions regarding this RFQ should be directed to Shannon Holston at [sholston@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:sholston@doe.k12.de.us).

### 5.2 Vendor Presentations

The State may elect to schedule a presentation session with vendors responding to this RFQ, as well as to solicit additional information and clarification of the information presented. The decision to schedule a presentation session for Partnership Zone schools will be made following review of all RFQ responses. DDOE reserves the right to contact listed references, and to request additional information as deemed necessary. The purpose of this RFQ is to provide information to districts to help them develop their RFP for lead partners.

### 5.3 Format for responses

Response Format	Page Limit (20 pages)
<b>Section I. Provider Information</b>	
Cover Page: Provider Information Form (Appendix A)	(2 pages)
<b>Section II. Description of Services</b>	
Description of Provider Model	(5 pages)
Experience in School Turnaround	(5 pages)
Evidence of Research Base	(4 pages)
Staffing Model	(2 pages)
Cost Information	(2 pages)

### 5.4 Instructions for submitting responses

Please review and follow all directions when completing this RFQ. Please use single-spaced type, 12-point Times New Roman font, numbered pages with 1-inch margins, and print hard copies on plain white paper. Electronic copies should be submitted in Microsoft Word format.

All respondents must fill out the Provider Information Form provided in Appendix (A) and respond to all requested information as stated in Section 4 of this RFQ. Proposals must adhere to the page limits as described in this document. Proposals that exceed the allowed page limits will not be considered.

Responses that are incomplete, are received after the deadline, or exceed the page limits will not be considered. No supplemental materials beyond what have been specifically requested in this RFQ will be considered.

**Completed Responses should be mailed or hand-delivered to:**

**Attn: School Turnaround Unit**  
**John W. Collette Education Resource Center**  
**35 Commerce Way**  
**Dover, Delaware 19904**  
**(312) 857-3392**  
[sholston@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:sholston@doe.k12.de.us)

**Appendix A**  
**Provider Information Form**  
**RFQ DOE #2012-01**

Organization Information	
Organization Name:	Click here to enter text.
Street Address:	Click here to enter text.
City, State, Zip:	Click here to enter text.
Type of Entity:	<input type="checkbox"/> For-profit <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit
Please select the category that best describes your organization:	Choose an item. If other, please specify: Click here to enter text.

Primary Contact Information for RFQ	
Contact Name:	Click here to enter text.
Title:	Click here to enter text.
Phone:	Click here to enter text.
Fax:	Click here to enter text.
Email:	Click here to enter text.
Website:	Click here to enter text.
Address (if different from above)	Click here to enter text.

Provider Model Information	
Schools/Grade Levels Served:	Please check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary (K-5) <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School (6-8) <input type="checkbox"/> High School (9-12)
School Areas Served:	Please check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Urban
Capacity to Serve:	Indicate the maximum number of students and schools you have capacity to serve: <b>Number of schools:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> One school <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple schools <b>Number of students:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1,000+ <input type="checkbox"/> 500-1,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 500
Specific Student Populations Served	Please check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Regular education students <input type="checkbox"/> English Language Learners (ELL) <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education students <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Click here to enter text.

## References

*Please list at least three schools that you have managed/supported in the last three years and provide references who can speak to your turnaround work in those schools below:*

### School 1

School Name: Enter.

Location: Enter

Number of years working with school: Enter.

### Reference 1

Name: Click here to enter text.

Position: Click here to enter text.

Organization: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

Relationship: Please briefly describe the context in which you have worked with this reference.

### School 2

School Name: Enter.

Location: Enter.

Number of years working with school: Enter.

### Reference 2

Name: Click here to enter text.

Position: Click here to enter text.

Organization: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

Relationship: Click here to enter text.

### School 3

Enter.

Location: Enter.

Number of years working with school: Enter.

### Reference 3

Name: Click here to enter text.

Position: Click here to enter text.

Organization: Click here to enter text.

Phone: Click here to enter text.

Email: Click here to enter text.

Relationship: Click here to enter text.